



Agape  
Volunteers

Volunteer In Ghana

# Ghana Information Booklet

Thank you for your interest in Agape Volunteers! We've sent you this booklet so that you can find out more about what we do in Ghana.

- The first section serves as an introduction to Ghana and our programmes there.
- The second section explains the process of applying for and booking a volunteer placement.
- The third section contains travel advice and is intended to prepare you for your time in Ghana.
- The fourth and final section provides more details on the nature of the programme on offer in Ghana.

We hope to make you feel as comfortable as possible about volunteering in Ghana, prepare you for your orientation and minimise any culture shock on arrival.

If you have any questions you can't find the answers for here please contact your trip adviser or email us at [info@agape-volunteers.com](mailto:info@agape-volunteers.com).



CEO and Founder, Agape Volunteers

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## Introducing Ghana

Ghana is located on the west coast of Africa, bordered by the Ivory Coast, Togo and Burkina Faso. Well known for its sturdy democracy, Ghana has been praised by Barack Obama as one of the leading democratic nations in Africa.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Ghanaian economy, responsible for 40% of employment. However, recent investment in oil production could see a marked change in Ghana's economic structure in coming years. A population of approximately 30 million people is widely spread across the country, encompassing various different groups, languages and dialects. English is the official language in Ghana and you will find that most people, especially in towns and cities, are confident English speakers.

Ghana gained independence in 1957 from British colonial rule. There are still many remnants of the colonial era, including the old slave forts in Elmina and Cape Coast. Both a sad reminder of former times and an impressive spectacle, the forts are definitely worth checking out during your stay. Ghana also boasts lush rainforests and some of the most beautiful beaches in Africa.

Ghana is fortunate in having a stable government and an atmosphere of safety and relative prosperity. Nevertheless, many parts of the country and of society suffer from the effects of poverty and poor infrastructure – this is where you, the volunteer, can come in.



# Agape Volunteers In Ghana

## How it all began

Agape Volunteers was founded by Guillaume Lefevre after he volunteered for the first time in 2009. He felt that many of the volunteer agencies he had encountered did not conform to his ideals, and resolved to try for himself. Alongside several like-minded employees of other organisations who were also eager to start out on their own, he set up Agape Volunteers.

They envisaged an organisation that was genuinely non-profit and volunteer-led. Three basic aims guided this new venture: to make volunteering as accessible as possible; to provide real, long term and flexible help to those in need; and to let volunteers grow into their role and make a real difference. These aims have not changed.

In 2011, Agape Volunteers began working with projects in Ghana. The programme in Ghana now consists of several elements with particular emphasis on teaching, childcare and medical placements, with volunteers also playing leading roles in sports and women's empowerment projects.

Over the years we have teamed up with a variety of fantastic grassroots projects in Ghana, most recently the amazing team at Becky's Foundation. They have dedicated their lives to improving local conditions through grassroots volunteer initiatives, and we are privileged to be able to work with them.

## Make a real difference

Our belief is that volunteers can make a real difference. While Agape Volunteers continues to grow, our aims remain the same. We will make volunteering possible for as many people as we can. We will seek to support projects which make a real difference in their area. We will continue to improve our capabilities as an aid and development organisation. We will listen to and utilise the experiences and expertise of our volunteers, to improve the aid and services we offer.

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## Our Team & Our Programmes

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## Meet The Team

Agape Volunteers has a fantastic team of volunteer coordinators in Ghana. You can find out a bit about our senior team below:

### Seth Asiedu

Seth is the co-founder of Becky's Foundation as well as managing a variety of other grassroots projects in the area. He holds a degree in education and has a rich experience working with national and international projects, as well as with volunteers from around the world. He has a deep understanding of the issues faced at grassroots level and his expertise in dealing with these issues is invaluable for everything we strive for in Ghana. He also works closely with the local church and is very much considered a leader and role model in the local community.

He is happily married and has four children of his own and you'll find him to be lively and fun, yet totally dedicated to his work. He says that he sees "nothing in the world being more fulfilling than uplifting others".

### Ato Sackey

Ato has extensive experience working with projects throughout Ghana and beyond, and currently holds management roles for a number of different local and international initiatives. His original training as a primary school teacher means that education projects are particularly close to his heart but he also plays an active role in some of our healthcare work.

He splits his time between Ghana and Canada (and beyond!) and you'll find him to be both easy-going and incredibly hard-working. As with Seth, we are fortunate to be able to count him as one of our coordinators in Ghana.



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## Our Programmes In Ghana

There's a lot to get involved in while volunteering in Ghana. We recommend you concentrate on one programme for your volunteer work to have the most impact.

### An Overview

We've split the activities on offer into three main programmes: teaching, childcare, and medical, though there are always opportunities to help out with some of our other work. During application, please select one of these programmes as your primary choice.

Your trip adviser will review your application and let you know if there are placements available for the dates you've suggested. If not, they will suggest alternate dates or programmes for you.

On booking, your application details will be passed on to the Agape team in Ghana, who will read these carefully before allocating a placement to you after your arrival. Placement allocations are based on personal requirements, suitability and placement needs.

Please be aware that the need for volunteers in different projects varies at different times of day and at different times of the week. Some placements are only available during the school term or school holidays while most are on offer year round. Sometimes placements may become unavailable unexpectedly. We encourage volunteers to be flexible and be prepared to work in different areas so you can make the greatest difference wherever it is needed.

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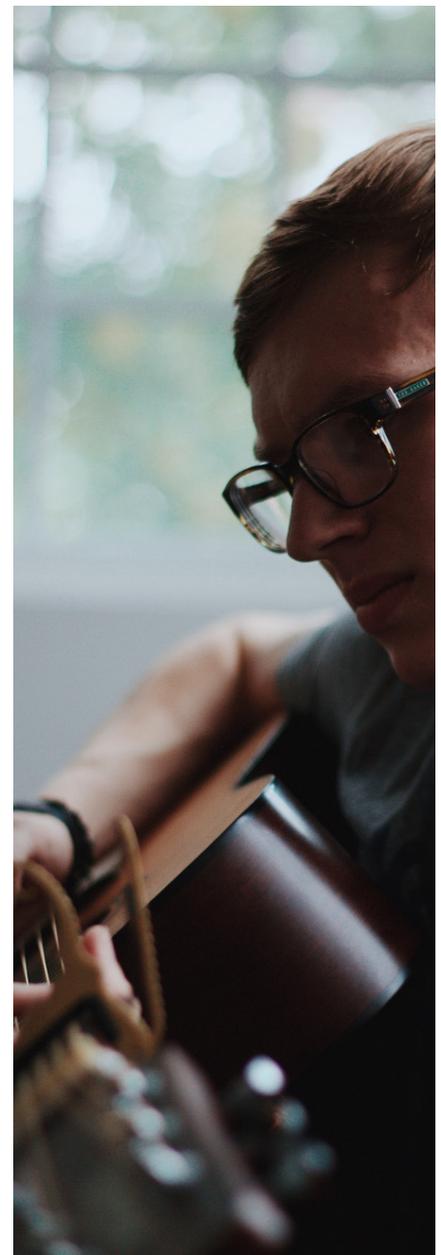
## Teaching

As a teaching volunteer in Ghana, your primary focus will be providing free lessons to local children, most likely at Becky's Preparatory School. You'll generally be expected to teach English, Mathematics, General Science, and Social Studies, but are also encouraged to educate to your own strengths. For example, there is often plenty of opportunity to help with sports, music and arts & crafts. Whilst it's important to follow the local curriculum in order to guarantee continuity and long-term improvements, teaching to your own strengths is part of what makes volunteering valuable.

By volunteering as an educator, you can help local teachers with large classes, ensuring that pupils receive more personal attention and tutelage.

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Language teaching is often one of the most valuable services volunteers can provide. Whilst English is widely spoken in Ghana, local fluency and teaching standards are not always as high as they could be. By setting an example of English pronunciation and grammar every day, you will create an improvement in your pupils' language skills.

This is a great programme for volunteers applying for or studying a PGCE, or qualified teachers looking for a different challenge. If you have studied or are enthusiastic about teaching, you can be an invaluable aid to the schools we work with. Even if you have not or do not plan to study teaching, don't be put off. As long as you are willing to follow the lead of local staff and more experienced volunteers, you can always help. Just make sure to know and accept your limits and to bring all your commitment and enthusiasm.

School holidays tend to fall in April, August and December. If you plan to travel at these times, the structure of your programme may be different from normal. However, there are always extra classes and workshops to get involved with so it is still worth volunteering on our teaching programme during these times.

For teaching tips and more info, see the Teaching entry in the APPENDIX. For info on how you can help schools by donating money or materials, please ask your trip adviser.



## Childcare

As a childcare volunteer in Ghana you will be working in a local facility which looks after disadvantaged children. Our main childcare placement was part funded through the Exceed Trust and helps to provide care to over 50 local children. This facility helps to provide education, pastoral support and healthcare provision to those who may otherwise go without.

You will help take care of children who do not generally receive as much attention as would be desired. You will also help with the running and maintenance of the orphanage, as well as organising games and activities. There may also be some opportunity to help with the provision of free classes and educational workshops. Perhaps the most valuable work you will do, however, will simply be spending time with the children – providing the individual care and attention that cannot always be provided without the help of volunteers.

Although “orphanage” is common parlance in the volunteer industry, these placements are more properly referred to as care homes or children’s homes. In the absence of alternatives they exist to provide support and care for vulnerable and at-risk children. These kids may have living parents or family who are not currently able to care for them, and there is a clear exit strategy to ensure that all children are able to start finding their own feet in the world.

This is a great programme for volunteers who are interested in childcare or working with children, or anyone happy to give of their time and themselves, and doesn’t mind hard work! Volunteers with childcare experience or qualifications are especially welcome.

For childcare tips and more info, see the Childcare entry in the APPENDIX. You may also want to check out Teaching. For info on how you can help childcare facilities by donating money or supplies, please ask your trip adviser.



## Medical

Medical volunteers in Ghana work in a local hospital or clinic under the supervision of a duty doctor and other staff, assisting with day to day practice. Appropriate duties and responsibilities are assigned by the hospital staff according to your training and experience, but these can include: helping with triage, prescribing and distributing basic medicines, dressing wounds, assisting in the maternity department, working in the lab, as well as record keeping and maintenance of hygiene standards.

One of our main medical placements in Ghana is the Senya Health Clinic, which is the main medical facility for people in Senya Beraku and the surrounding villages. The placement has wards for males, females and children, as well as a maternity unit and a laboratory. It is extremely under-resourced considering the size of the area it covers and the number of people it helps on a daily basis, so your assistance there can be very valuable.

Medical volunteers may also have the chance to take part in some of our outreach work in Ghana. This involves joining up with local health workers and other volunteers to provide health check-ups, immunizations and public health education to the local community. When we have the resources to do so we also undertake free targeted testing and treatment projects in some of the most under-served villages and communities in the area.

This is a great programme for medical students looking to complete an elective, or anyone with medical experience who would like to gain a new perspective on their work and broaden their understanding of medical care in a third world setting. You must be a qualified health care worker or have completed at least one year of a medical-related programme to qualify for this programme. Your trip advisor will ask for some documentation as part of this process.

For more information on application and programme requirements, as well as medical tips and details, see the Medical entry in the APPENDIX. For info on how you can help volunteer-run community health projects in Ghana, please ask your trip adviser.



## A note on Placement Projects

Agape Volunteers is committed to placing volunteers only where they are needed, as far as we possibly can. If placing a volunteer will not benefit a project in any worthwhile way, we will avoid doing so. As the needs of individual placement projects are regularly changing, this can make placing volunteers a complicated business.

For this reason, although the descriptions above are representative of our programmes, we cannot guarantee that you will have the opportunity to take part in all the activities mentioned. Nor will you be assigned a specific placement project until after you arrive in Ghana. For a representative example of the kind of project you will work on, please see the examples in the APPENDIX.



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## Booking A Programme

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## Making an Application

If you have not done so already, the first step in booking a programme is to make an application on our website, at [www.agape-volunteers.com/](http://www.agape-volunteers.com/).

Just hit [apply now](#) to get started.

In general, our intake is flexible in Ghana. This means you can arrive and start your programme on any date which works for you, and volunteer for any period from two weeks to one year. Please note that the number of placements in Ghana is limited, so booking early is advised. Payment will be required at least 45 days before your date of departure. Therefore, please make sure to apply ahead and to complete your booking in good time.

Fees scale according to the length of your stay. For more info on fees and what they cover please see:

[www.agape-volunteers.com/pricing-overview](http://www.agape-volunteers.com/pricing-overview).

When filling in the application form, you will be asked to provide the following information:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Nationality
- Email address
- Contact telephone number
- Length of stay
- Programme
- Approximate arrival date
- Whether you are travelling with anyone else



## Personal Trip Advisor

Once you've applied, you'll be assigned a personal trip adviser. Trip advisers are the friendly face of Agape Volunteers, providing you with a consistent, human point of contact with Agape Volunteers. They are there to answer any questions you have, guide you through the booking process, and help prepare you for your time in Ghana.

You should receive an email from your trip adviser within 48 hours of making your application. While answering any queries you may have, they will confirm your programme details, including programme type, approximate arrival date and length of stay. Trip advisers are mostly former volunteers with Agape. They are paid a commission for every booking they complete, but also donate a great deal of their own time to provide volunteer support and administrative work, which they carry out alongside degrees, jobs and busy lives!

If you'd be interested in joining the Trip Adviser Team, contact Gee on [gee@agape-volunteers.com](mailto:gee@agape-volunteers.com).

## Billing

When you're ready, your trip adviser will bill you according to your planned length of stay (we call this your "programme fee"). Agape Volunteers does not charge registration fees, so paying your programme fee is all you need to do to book your placement.



Programme fees must be paid at least 45 days before your date of departure. Up until this point, programme fees can be refunded, minus transaction fees incurred by the transfers.

If you choose to book an excursion, your trip adviser will bill you for these too.

The programme fee includes the following:

- Travel Insurance with Agape – the most comprehensive travel insurance provided as standard in the industry
- Hosted accommodation
- Two meals a day
- Airport pick up and drop off
- Orientation
- All Agape admin and registration
- Pre- and post-programme support from your trip adviser
- In-country support from our experienced Ghanaian staff
- A donation towards Agape's projects

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The programme fee does not cover other travel costs, such as:

- Flights
- Visa
- Vaccinations and anti-malarials
- Transport to and from your placement and accommodation
- Additional excursions

## Where is my money spent?

Agape Volunteers is proud to be one of the few genuinely non-profit volunteer organisations in the world. Most of your programme fee is spent on the costs of making your volunteer programme possible.

The majority covers your airport transfers, food and accommodation, insurance, and the Agape staff who support you in Ghana and organise your volunteer placement. A smaller sum goes towards the costs of Agape Volunteers in the UK such as merchant banking fees on payments and international transfers, commission for the trip advisers who help you to book and offer contact support during your stay, and the marketing which helps us to bring our programmes to your attention.

After these costs, the surplus on your programme fee is committed to funding the projects that Agape Volunteers support and spearhead in Ghana, including some placement projects. However, this does not necessarily mean we give a set amount of money to your placement during your time in Ghana. More often, we accumulate this surplus until we have enough to fund larger scale projects with a more pronounced impact – for example, expanding a placement’s facilities or aiding with debt.

Since we have been working in Ghana Agape has contributed to a number of worthwhile projects through the use of volunteer fees. These take a wide variety of forms but are absolutely key to who we are and what we try achieve.

Some examples of this include:

- Purchasing instruments and other materials for long-term music projects in Accra and Takoradi
- Improving the living conditions and adaptation of classroom space at one of our partner children’s homes, allowing for provision of additional free lessons
- A music festival in Jamestown, in turn providing ongoing financial support for the music project there
- Rehabilitation of a children’s play area for a local street children organisation
- Regular medical outreach projects, including provision of free testing and medication to underserved communities
- Purchase of a vehicle to be used for transporting children in rural communities to school

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*If you would like a breakdown of where we spend our money, we would be more than happy to provide one. Please can email our CEO, Guillaume Lefevre, at [gee@agape-volunteers.com](mailto:gee@agape-volunteers.com), or ask your trip adviser.*

# Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is provided as standard and at no extra cost when you volunteer with Agape Volunteers. Travel insurance is essential, covering you against untoward developments which might affect your time away. By offering travel insurance as standard, we aim to make sure you have cover designed for you.

Underwritten at Lloyd's of London by ProSight Specialty Insurance, the Agape Travel Policy provides bespoke travel insurance tailored to the needs of our volunteers.

Travel insurance with Agape Volunteers covers you not only for the standard risks of travelling, such as flight delays and lost passports, but also situations specific to volunteers.

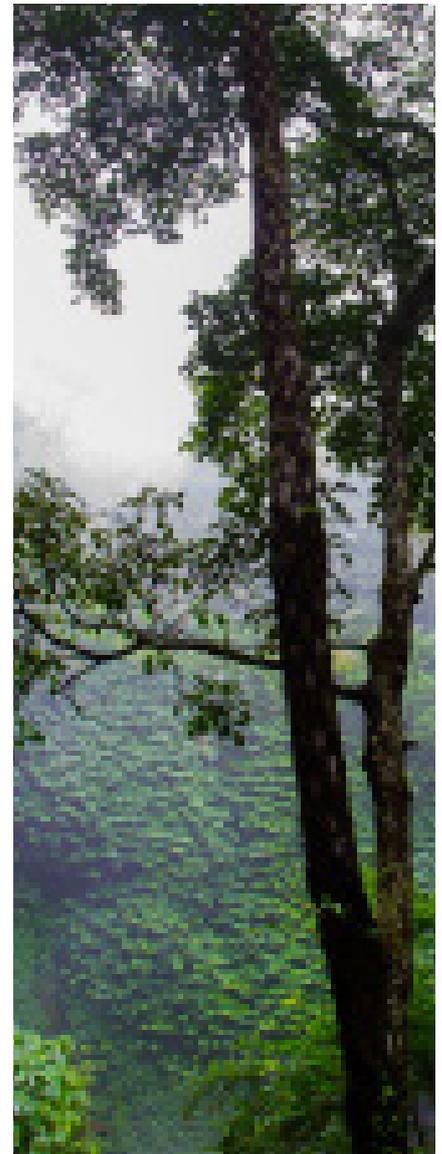
This includes:

- Medical insurance covering emergency treatment, hospitalisation and repatriation; with 24 medical assistance.
- Needle stick cover and exposure to biological fluids as standard.
- Cover for over 70 activities and sports, including volunteer work and Agape Adventures activities such as safaris and mountain hiking.\*\*

Travel Insurance with Agape Volunteers is available regardless of where you'll be travelling from and your cover is valid from the moment you pay your programme fee, insuring you against cancellation and curtailment.

For a summary of the cover provided, or the full policy wording, simply ask your trip adviser. Full policy documentation will also be included with your volunteer policy (please see below).

*\*\*The Agape Travel Policy does not provide medical indemnity to practitioners. Medical volunteers should consult the relevant authority. For more info please contact your trip adviser.*



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## Flights

Flights are not included in your programme fee but your trip adviser can help you to look for low flight fares. Make sure they know your travel dates as soon as possible.

Depending on how early you book and when you plan to fly, return flights from the UK to Accra Kotoka International airport should cost between £400 and £600, with flights from the USA costing between \$800 and \$1100. Flight prices from other countries vary.

After booking flights, you must provide your trip adviser with your full flight details (arrival date and time, departure date and time, flight numbers) so that they can arrange your airport pickup and drop off.

## Volunteer Policy

Agape Volunteers requires all volunteers to sign our volunteer policy. This contains our code of conduct, detailing our promises to you and what we require in return. After you've paid your programme fee, your trip adviser will email you a copy of this policy to sign and return.



## Vaccination and Anti-Malarials

Before travelling in Ghana, you must consult your GP about vaccinations and anti-malarials. For our recommendations, see the section on vaccinations below.

## VISA

Before you travel to Ghana you must apply for a tourist visa. Once you've completed your application online and sent off your passport, you can expect your passport and visa to be returned to you in 10-14 days. The whole process shouldn't take more than 3 weeks, but it's a good idea to start your application as soon as possible. However, you won't be able to apply until you have confirmed your arrival and departure dates, so flights come first.

Please note that if you are looking to volunteer in Ghana for longer than 3 months, you may need to apply for an extension. Please contact the Ghana High Commission for further advice.

Your trip adviser will provide you with more detailed advice on how to apply, including the addresses and other details you will need. If you have any difficulties applying for your visa or any questions, please don't hesitate to ask them.

IF YOU HAVE LESS THAN 3 WEEKS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE, please notify your trip adviser immediately so that they can advise you on the best course of action.

## Arrival Procedure

On receipt of your signed volunteer policy, your trip adviser will take you through the arrival procedure. They will also provide a checklist covering all the necessary preparation for your trip (vaccinations, visa, etc.), as well as a list of contact numbers to take with you in case of difficulties.

Remember to print off these contact numbers so you have them to hand when travelling.

## Fundraising And Donations

Many volunteers choose to raise money before they volunteer, either to help cover the costs of their trip or to fund donations and projects in country. If you would be interested in fundraising, ask your trip adviser for the Agape Fundraising Guide.

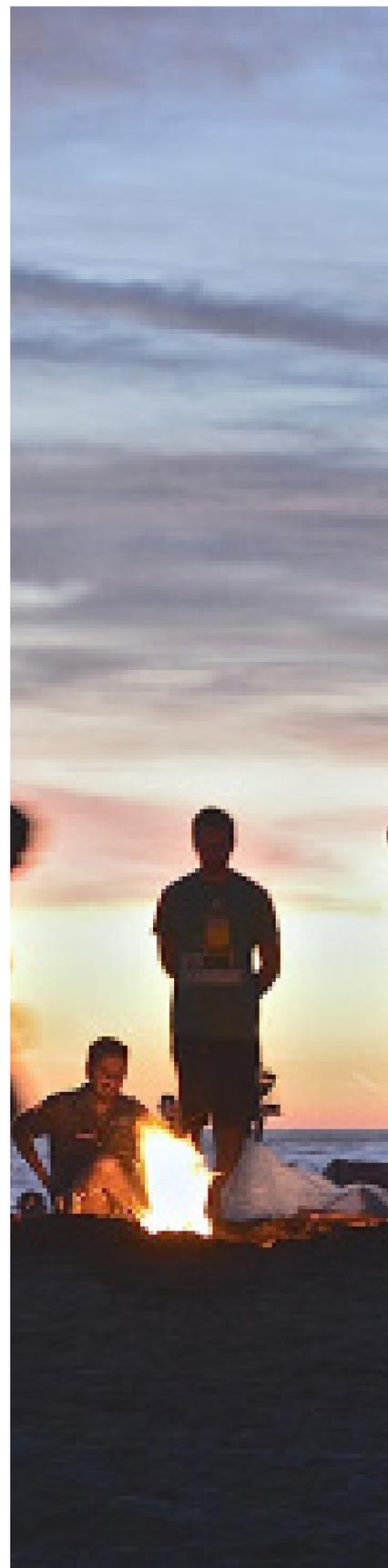
## Additional Excursions

Agape Volunteers offers a number of excursions in addition to those included in your programme fee. Some of these excursions need to be booked in advance, through your trip adviser, while others you can arrange in-country with the Ghanaian team.

Feel free to ask any questions you may have about your placement, Ghana, or Agape Volunteers generally. Your trip adviser will do their best to provide professional answers, lay to rest any worries, and ultimately get you ready for your time in Ghana.

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## Preparing For Arrival

Volunteering in Ghana will be an exhilarating, horizon-widening time. You will find new friends and take on new challenges, experiencing a different way of life while you do so. It will also be hard, tiring work, in an unfamiliar country far from home. It will push you outside of your comfort zone at least once.

To make the most of this opportunity, it's a good idea to make sure that you are prepared as possible, both physically and mentally. This section aims to help you with your preparations and give you an idea of what to expect.

## Physical Preparation

The last thing you want is for your trip to be ruined by ill health. Before you depart, you need to make sure you have received all the necessary vaccinations and medication, as well as a clean bill of health.

### Vaccinations

Before you depart, you **MUST** consult your doctor about which vaccinations you will need for a stay in Ghana. Some of these may take several months, so it's worth arranging an appointment as soon as possible.

#### Mandatory Vaccination:

- Yellow Fever (required for your visa and entry into Ghana)

#### Our recommended vaccinations are:

- Tuberculosis
- Poliomyelitis
- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Typhoid
- Tetanus
- Meningitis

## Prevention

With all diseases, avoiding infection is the best strategy. As well as getting the necessary vaccinations and anti-malarials, you should aim to prevent infection in any way you can.

To prevent bites, make sure to bring plenty of insect repellent. A mosquito net which can be fixed from the ceiling is also a must.

Make sure to maintain good standards of hygiene, following all the guidelines laid out here and by the team in Ghana. For more info on hygiene, please see the relevant section below.



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## Anti-Malarials

We insist that all volunteers purchase a full course of anti-malarial tablets before departure. You should consult with your doctor about the courses available and costs.

Malarone is popular due to minimal side effects, which can be reduced further if the drug is taken with food or milky drinks. Doxycycline, Proguanil and Mefloquine offer viable cheaper alternatives to Malarone, but please check the side effects and consult your GP before taking. A common side effect is increased vulnerability to sunburn, so make sure to take proper precautions. It is important to ensure that you finish your course of anti-malarials when you return home. Please be aware that Ghana is a chloroquine-resistant malaria zone.

## Health Check-ups

We recommend that you arrange medical, dental and eye check-ups before you depart, to identify any issues that might affect your time in Ghana.

## Mental Preparation

It's also a good idea to think about how to prepare yourself mentally. Culture shock and homesickness are to be expected, and while they're normally shortlived, they're no fun while they last. And no matter how hard we try, we can never fully prepare you for all the differences between life in Ghana and life at home. However, with a healthy mindset, these should be no more than a fleeting problem; and with a bit of preparation, you're ready to be a fantastic, valuable volunteer.

### Why are you volunteering?

An important first step is to ask yourself why you are volunteering. Agape Volunteers is sincerely committed to providing quality, rewarding placements for our volunteers. We want to provide opportunities that may not be available otherwise – opportunities to gain valuable

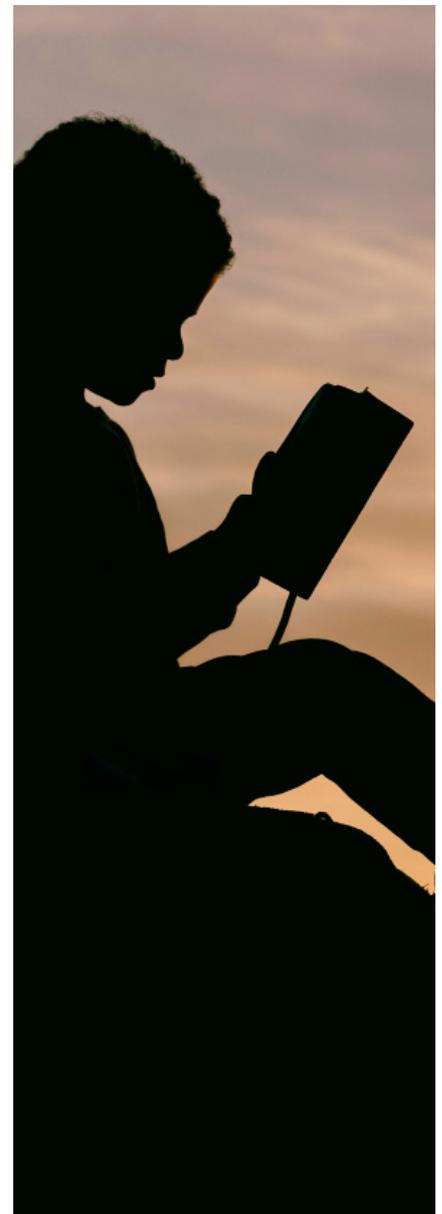
work and life experience; opportunities to travel, see foreign cultures and cities; opportunities to take exciting trips and excursions. And opportunities to help people.

Because ultimately, this is not only about you, but about the people you help by volunteering. And due to the nature of volunteer work in Ghana, it's almost certain that something about your trip will not be exactly as you expected. We will do everything we can to deliver a fantastic experience and to solve any problems, but the best volunteers are those who are willing to roll with the unexpected, even with disappointment, in order to achieve something tangible. Volunteers who want to help in any way they can. Agape Volunteers is for you, but ultimately, volunteering is what you make it!

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Learning About Ghana

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## Doing Some Research

A little learning goes a long way. Take the time to find out more about the people you will live and work with and the country they call home. Read up about Ghanaian languages – and see if you can learn some! Speaking the language will help you to understand and get closer to your colleagues in Ghana.

Travel guides like the Rough Guide and Lonely Planet are a good place to start. We also recommend the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's travel advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ghana>

There is a glossary of basic Fante at the end of this info book. If you'd like to learn more, there are several introductions to Fante on the market, including Rosetta Stone's.

## Being a Valuable Volunteer

As a volunteer you have access to fantastic opportunities all over the world – and Agape Volunteers tries to offer some of the best available. Our volunteer placements in Ghana are a chance to explore a new culture, gain valuable work experience and qualifications, enjoy exciting excursions and try to make the world a better place. However, it's important to remember that as a volunteer you should always aim to be at least as valuable to your placement as it is to you. Here are some tips on how to do that:

- Be positive – a can-do attitude and a willingness to get stuck in can make more of a difference than you realise.
- Keep an open mind – try not to have fixed ideas about what you will do on your placement: circumstances and needs can and do change. Be ready for new people, a different culture and unexpected challenges.
- Embrace a culture of sharing – don't be afraid to share your knowledge and don't forget you are there to learn too. Embracing what placement staff and other volunteers can teach you will make you a more valuable volunteer; and by sharing your experience and ideas.
- Be realistic about what you hope to achieve – think about how long you can volunteer for and plan any projects or activities to fit that timeframe, or else make sure they can carry on without you. You are most valuable where you can contribute to the long term goals of your placement project.
- Take something with you – most volunteers have access to valuable resources which can make a real difference to our projects in Ghana. This might be storybooks and learning resources, or medical supplies.

## African Time

Talk to anyone who's travelled in Africa and they'll recognise the concept of "African time". In general, there is a noticeable difference between western and African attitudes towards time.



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## African Time Cont.

While in the west we often live by the clock, moving from task to task in strict sequence, in African cultures you often find a more “polychronic” approach, with several tasks being managed simultaneously over a period of time. This is often seen as a more relaxed attitude to timekeeping and punctuality.

When western expectations about scheduling and punctuality encounter African time, friction can occur. Bear this in mind while you volunteer, and be prepared to be kept waiting sometimes and for plans to be more fluid than you might be used to at home.

The Agape Volunteers team in Ghana are professionals who will strive to meet your expectations about timekeeping, but you should remember that you and they are living and working in a culture with different attitudes towards time.

## Dealing With Culture Shock

Culture shock and homesickness can be a part of volunteering abroad, something which almost all volunteers experience. The shock is literal – Ghana is harsher and dirtier than most volunteers are accustomed to, and you will be exposed to poverty and suffering in ways you may not have been before. At some point, normally within the first three or four days of your programme, you will begin to feel the lack of home comforts, and miss your family and friends. These feelings are completely natural and, more importantly, will pass quickly. Below are some tips on dealing with homesickness and culture shock.

- First and foremost, remember that these feelings won't last forever. Soon, you'll start to settle in, make friends and learn to find your way around the local area – and when the time comes to leave, you won't want to go!
- Get to know your fellow volunteers before you go. Use our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/AgapeVolunteers](http://www.facebook.com/AgapeVolunteers)) to find other people volunteering at the same time as you. You can also ask your trip adviser for help.
- Stay in contact with friends and family back home if you need to. See the section on Communication below for the best ways to stay in touch.
- Remember that your host, the Ghanaian team and your fellow volunteers are all there to give you their support. It is very important to voice your feelings as these may not always be easily picked up by those around you. If you need to talk to someone, don't hesitate.
- Long term feelings of unhappiness or depression may be a side effect of your anti-malarials. If feelings of unhappiness persist, please talk to your host, the Ghanaian team and your trip advisor immediately.



# Living In Ghana

The majority of volunteers will not have lived in a third world country before and will not know what to expect. It is important to understand the conditions you'll be living in before you go.

## Accommodation

Our volunteers in Ghana typically live together in a volunteer house managed by a team of local Ghanaians. Breakfast and dinner are provided by local staff, who are also on hand to provide care and support to all of volunteers.

In general, you will be sleeping in a shared room (2-6 people), and all our volunteer accommodation is equipped with electricity, western-style toilet and shower facilities. Power cuts and water shortages can occur but are infrequent and shouldn't affect you too much.

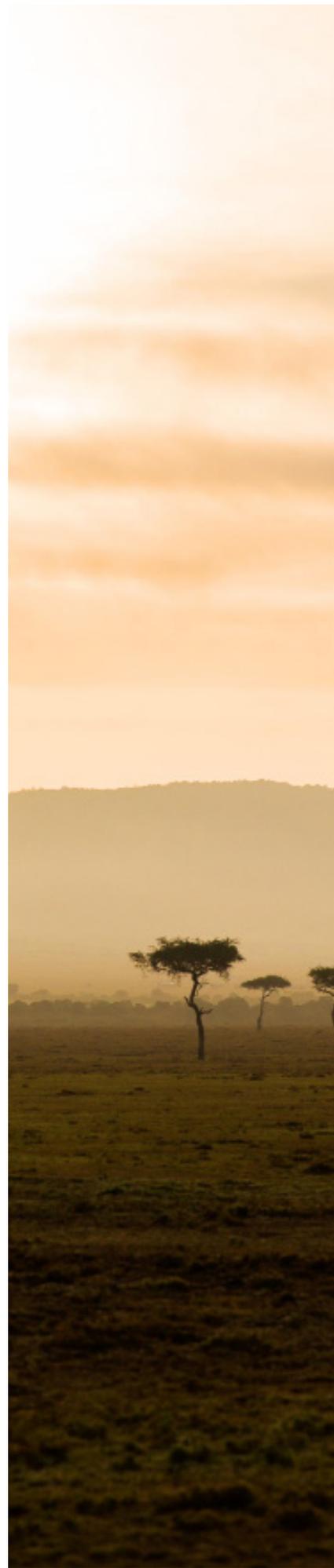
You'll eat with other volunteers, watch TV and hang out in the evenings. Living with other volunteers in locally-run accommodation provides a good combination of socialising with other volunteers and experiencing life with an extended Ghanaian family. This can be a little overwhelming for some people so if you need more space, remember that you can retreat to your room. But please do be prepared to be living in fairly close quarters with your fellow volunteers too.

It's polite to get a gift for your hosts to say thank you for their hospitality. Many volunteers like to bring something from their own country so that their gift is more personal. Alternatively, you can ask your hosts if there anything they need, and buy a gift locally once you're in Ghana.

Your hosts may invite you to church on Sundays and it's worth going at least once. Church services in Ghana are very different from those elsewhere in the world, making it a worthwhile experience regardless of your religious views.

## Your Room

You will be sharing a room with at least one other volunteer. Bedding is provided, but it's recommended that you bring a sheet sleeping bag/ cotton sleeping bag liner too (anything heavier will likely be too hot). You should also source your own mosquito net, either in Ghana or before you depart.





## House Rules & Guidelines

Please be aware that there are additional house rules you will need to follow, for your comfort and safety as well as that of the other people you're sharing space with. These may concern how far in advance you need to inform your host that you will be missing a meal or away for the weekend; suitable times for coming home in the evening and noise guidelines; and so on. We trust that our volunteers will respect these rules.

## Electricity

The majority of sockets in Ghana are the 3-pin variety found in the UK. Adaptors should be easy to find if the sockets are different at home. You should have no problem charging phones, laptops, cameras and other appliances; however, be aware that power cuts can occur.

## Water

There is running water available and plenty of showering facilities too.

The water may be cold. Fortunately, given the heat in Ghana, this is rarely a bad thing!

Tap water should not be drunk by volunteers – instead drink only bagged or bottled water. Bagged water is generally cheaper, and can be decanted into a bottle for easy access.

Water shortages may mean running water will not be available every day of the week. Instead, you will rely on a storage tank filled while the water is running. During this time, the toilet will need to be flushed manually using a bucket. You may find you need to think more about conserving water than you are used to, and also that you shower less! However, it's surprising how little water you actually need to have a refreshing wash using a bucket or basin, so don't worry too much.

## Cooking

Your host will cook breakfast and dinner for you and your fellow volunteers. Most volunteers prefer to buy lunch during the day from one of the street vendors in the local area, and this can also be a good opportunity to spend social time with placement staff.

You may also want to get a group of other volunteers together to sample

some of the restaurants in town. Just ask your hosts to show you to their local favourites.

## Laundry

Clothes will be handwashed while you're in Ghana. While we recommend that you try doing this yourself at least once, you will not have to all the time. It's best to ask your host about the best way to get your washing done; she will likely do it for you in exchange a small fee.

## Paying for Extra Days

The cost of your accommodation is included in your programme fee. However, you may find you are staying in Ghana longer than the number of weeks for which you have paid, in order to secure the cheapest flights or simply to get a few more days in Ghana. If you wish to stay in volunteer accommodation during these extra days, you may need to arrange payment for this time personally with your host.

## Food

Ghanaian food has many influences, including Indian flavours. Expect to eat lots of rice and banku (a corn/cassava based dough with a consistency like mashed potato) as a staple in your evening meal. These tend to be served with fish, beans and meat, in stews or curry sauces. As a rule, Ghanaian food is very tasty and flavoursome, using a range of different spices; however, food is not usually very spicy. Some meals will be more familiar – bolognese dishes are quite common – but don't be afraid to try the unfamiliar too!

Breakfast tends to be fairly simple, consisting of various local porridges, bread, eggs, coffee and tea. Your host will prepare breakfast and dinner six days a week.

Lunch will be your own responsibility. Street food is probably your best option, being very cheap. Vendors sell jollof rice (a mildly spicy, flavoured rice) with chicken or fish for very reasonable prices. Other snacks are available - groundnuts (peanuts) and popcorn are especially common and easy to eat on the go, and fruit is plentiful and will be peeled and chopped for you if you ask.

You can also prepare your own lunch, though this will take a bit of forward planning. If you would like to use kitchen facilities, make sure to ask your host politely first. Bread, jam, peanut butter and other ingredients for sandwiches can be bought at local shops or supermarkets. There are a few grocery stores in the area which will sell some of these items, or there are plenty of western-style supermarkets stocking a wide range of items in Accra.

Fruit can be an important part of your diet. Depending on the season, there are always interesting fruits available as well as more familiar varieties. Trying fresh fruit in Ghana is a must – eating locally grown mangoes, bananas, pineapple and so on, you'll quickly realise that the fruit imported by the supermarkets just isn't the same!

Our hosts will happily cater to vegetarians and for those with allergies, but they cannot make food to everyone's individual taste.

Being a vegetarian in Ghana isn't a problem. Although lots of dishes contain fish, it is simple to use vegetable substitutes in most of them. There are plenty of vegetarian options, mostly including vegetable stews or fried rice dishes. Please remember to make your preferences clear to your trip adviser and your host. A vegan diet is difficult to support in Ghana, requiring you virtually to cater for yourself.

Other dietary requirements can also be supported. Gluten is fairly easy to avoid for those with celiac disease, with rice and banku being gluten-free and widely available. Breakfast will be more problematic, however - we recommend bringing enough gluten free bread and breakfast cereals from home to last your stay.

If you suffer from allergies or have other special dietary requirements, please



make your needs clear to your trip adviser before you go AND to your host after you arrive. Your trip adviser will make a note of your preferences, but the best way to avoid confusion is to outline your needs yourself. If your dietary requirements are particularly restrictive, it's a good idea to provide an outline of what you are able to eat, to be sure your needs are understood.



## Hygiene

Getting sick can ruin a trip, but by practising proper hygiene you can greatly reduce your chances of falling ill. Make sure to follow these guidelines while in Ghana.

- Drink only bottled or bagged water. Never drink tap water – this is fine for the locals, but will almost certainly make foreign travellers sick.
- Don't forget to use bottled water to clean your teeth, too!
- Wash all fresh fruit and vegetables before you eat. First wash with tap water, then rinse with bottled water. All food at volunteer houses is prepared hygienically.
- Wash your hands often. Carry a bottle of antiseptic handgel to use during the day. Make sure you clean your hands after physical contact with children too.
- If you are on the medical programme, you **MUST** follow the guidelines you have been trained in and that are laid out by the project staff.



## Climate & Weather

As with most countries, the weather in Ghana can be variable. However, the temperature in Ghana is fairly consistent all year round, with average temperatures of around 26-28°C. December to April is generally slight warmer and June to September slightly cooler – however, the average is still 25°C, so very hot by many countries' standards..

Rainfall is a major aspect of the Ghanaian climate, with seasonal differences to note. May to August are usually the wettest months - however, this should not deter you from volunteering during this time. Even during the wet season rainfall isn't vast and due to the high temperatures you will dry off pretty quickly.

It's best to plan for hot weather as well as rain. Ghana is fairly near the equator and it is important to remember that you will burn more easily, even on an overcast day. Anti-malarials can also make you more prone to burning. Bring plenty of suncream.

Footwear is very important. Ghana can be dusty when dry and muddy when wet, so a good pair of boots or decent shoes are a must. Closed-toed shoes are good, or you can go with sandals and accept that you'll get dirty. Bear in mind that your placement will expect a reasonable standard of dress.

## Money

### Ghana Cedi

The currency used throughout Ghana is the cedi (GHS). The exchange rate can fluctuate hugely but it is usually around 5-8 cedis to the British pound (GBP), or 4-6 cedis to the US dollar. This can vary widely though, so make sure to check online before you travel.

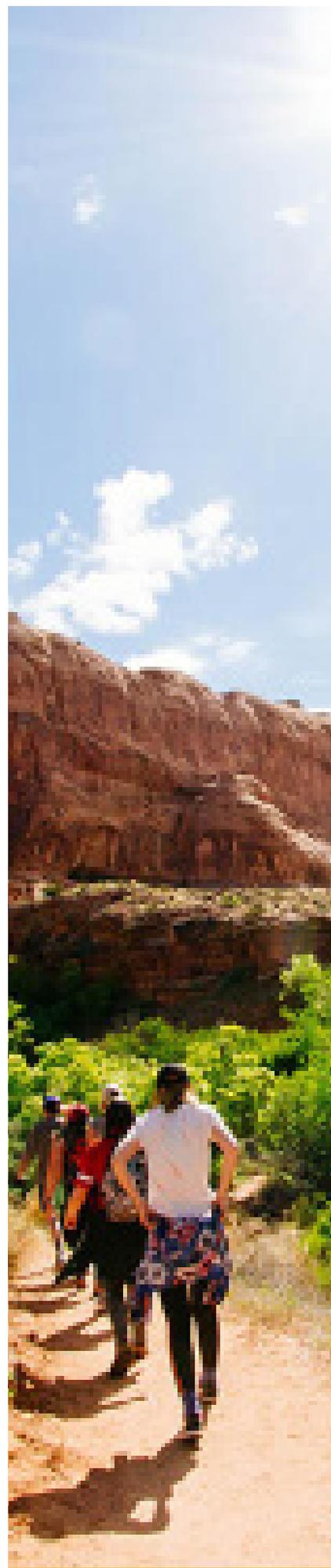
### Exchanging Money

It can be difficult, if not impossible, to get Ghanaian currency outside Ghana. However, exchanging money is very straightforward so we recommend bringing £100/\$100 (or the equivalent sum in another major currency) to be exchanged on your first day there.

For short trips, it's probably easier to take cash with you and exchange it as you go. There are numerous places to change money, though US dollars, British pounds, or Euros are the most easily changed.

### Withdrawing Money in Ghana

There are plenty of ATMs where you can withdraw money. These usually work and give fair rates; however, bear in mind that your bank will likely charge you for making the withdrawal abroad, so exchanging money may be cheaper. Nevertheless, for volunteers on longer trips who wish to avoid bringing large sums of cash, ATMs may be the best option, especially combined with a travel money card.





You should inform your bank that you will be making withdrawals in Ghana, or your card may be blocked.

## Budgeting

Your basic expenses while living in Ghana are bottled water, lunch and public transport. You should expect to spend about £5 a week on bottled water.

Lunch will vary week by week, but another £10 per week should be sufficient.

Transport will vary depending on how many people you can share a taxi with to and from your placement project. In a worst case scenario where you get a taxi by yourself every

day, you would be paying around £10 per week; however, most volunteers will not have to take transport to/from their placement.

In total, you should find that a budget of £35/\$50 per week is sufficient for the basics.

However, please be aware that these costs are estimated and will fluctuate in line with changes in fuel prices and other factors, especially the volatile exchange rate on the cedi.

In general we'd recommend budgeting £50/\$60 per week to be on the safe side.

Other expenses include

gifts, souvenirs, shopping at local markets and weekend excursions. How much you spend on these things is obviously up to you, but we recommend budgeting an additional £150/\$180 per month in order to make the most out of your time in Ghana.

## Weekends & Free Time

Your weekends and evenings are your own while you volunteer. This is time for you to relax, go on trips or take part in 'extracurricular' activities at your placement or elsewhere. There will always be other volunteers, children and staff to chat, watch TV and play games with in the evenings, while trips will normally take place over weekends.

It is also possible to go on plenty of extra arranged excursions to other parts of Ghana. For more details contact your trip adviser about Agape Adventures. Popular trips include Kakum rainforest for a treetop walk, visiting the historical forts at Cape Coast, or relaxing on Ghana's stunning coastline.

## Communication

It's reassuring to know you'll be able to contact home and keep in touch with staff and volunteers during your stay.

Here are some tips on communicating in Ghana.

### Mobile Phone

It's a good idea to have a mobile phone with you while you volunteer. They allow you to contact the Ghanaian team if you need them and stay in touch with your fellow volunteers. It can also be reassuring for your family and friends to know that you'll be contactable.

A local SIM card will usually offer much cheaper local and international rates than your SIM from home. You can buy a local SIM from many shops and market stalls, and the Ghanaian team or another volunteer can tell you where to go. You can get a new SIM for a little money, and then credit is very cheap. SIM cards must be registered with an ID. Often the vendor will use theirs, but you may need your passport to get one.

Local rates are very low – calls within Ghana can be as little as 3 Ghana peswas (about 1p) per minute. International rates vary quite a lot but are also very cheap. Remember that it is cheaper to make international calls to landlines than to mobiles.

You can buy or rent a handset after you arrive, or bring yours with you. Many phones will not accept SIMs from other companies, or may only take smaller cards, so please check before you travel. Be careful of your data usage, as this is usually not as cheap as credit.

### Internet

The cheapest way to stay in touch with friends and family is via the internet, through email, WhatsApp, social networks, and services like Skype. Many volunteers also choose to write a travel blog, and volunteers who fundraise may have promised an email diary for their sponsors. There are two ways to access



the internet in Ghana: a data package on your mobile phone or using a modem stick plugged into your laptop.

Modem sticks offer internet for a very reasonable price - around £20 per month, though you may find a local SIM card in your phone is more convenient.

## Travel

After you've been in Ghana for a couple of days and are starting to feel more confident, you'll find you want to explore the local area. You may also need to take public transport to reach your placement project. If this is the case, one of the Ghanaian team will accompany on your first couple of days, until you are happy making the trip without them. However, please note that you will be expected to travel to your placement unaccompanied by staff for the majority of your stay, either with volunteers or in rare cases on your own.

Public transport in Ghana is different from the western norm. Taxis are the primary form of public transport. There are generally more taxis than private cars on the road so you'll rarely have trouble finding one.

Taxis come in two forms: chartered and shared. Chartered taxis are like taxis at home - they can be hailed at the roadside and will take you from door to door.

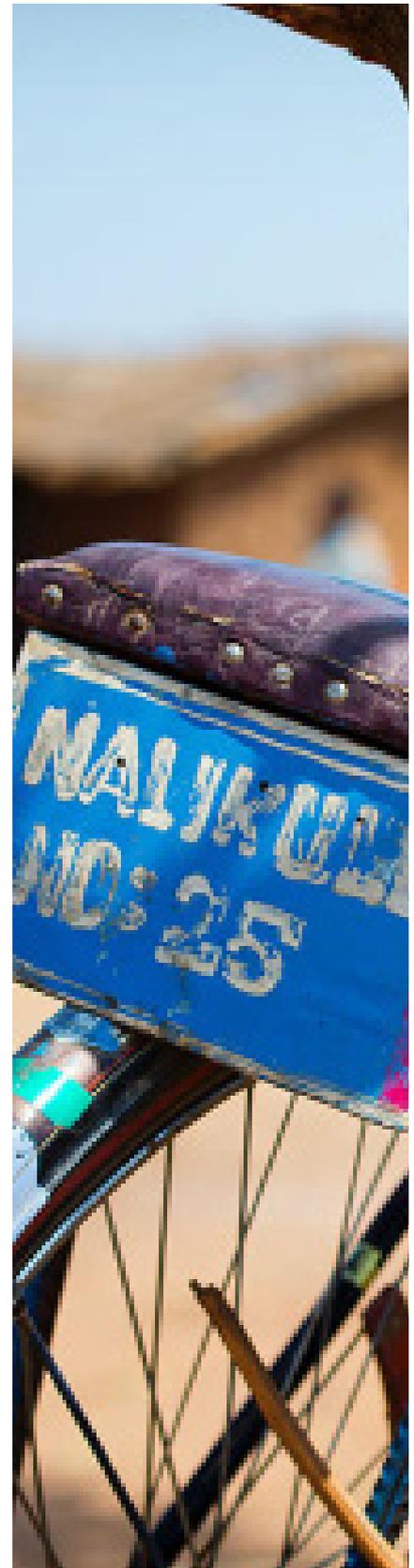
Shared taxis are more like buses, in that they only pickup from stations and have set routes they travel. Learning the various stations and the best routes from your volunteer house to your placement is more than a day's work but very rewarding, as shared taxis are considerably cheaper than chartered. You will be introduced to the taxi system during your orientation and you can always ask the volunteer coordinators for help.

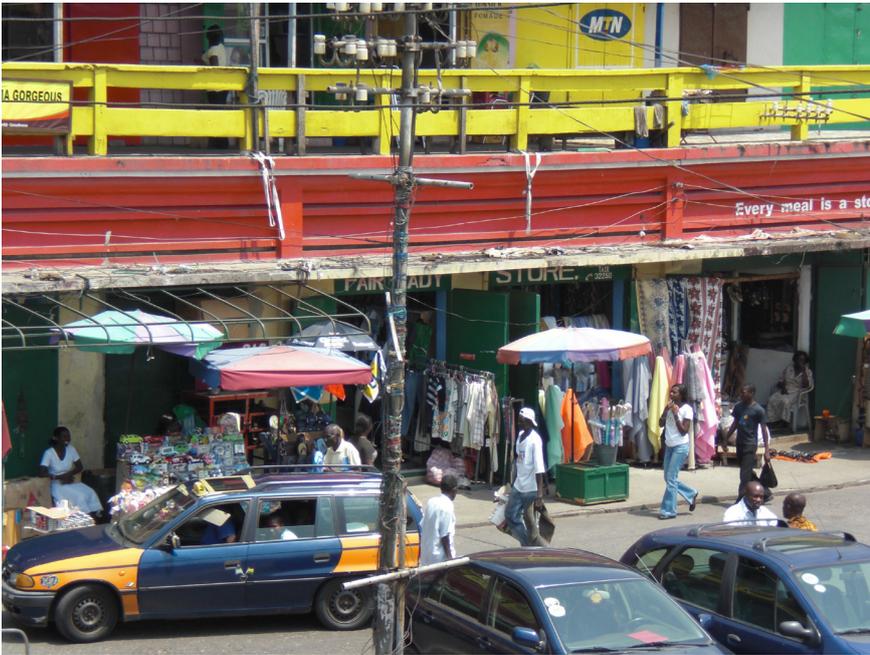
Ask your host and the Ghanaian team how much you should be paying for regular trips, as taxi drivers may try to take advantage when they realise you're a foreign visitor. Agree the price of the journey before getting in, firmly but with a smile! Don't be afraid to barter with drivers if you feel they're overcharging you.

For slightly longer journeys, for example to nearby towns, you can take "tro-tros" - essentially minibuses - which you catch at tro-tro stations. Fares are generally very reasonable but will obviously vary according to the length of the journey.

For longer or more rural journeys, seek advice from the Ghanaian team about the best way to travel.

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There are two ways to access the internet in Ghana: a data package on your mobile phone or using a modem stick plugged into your laptop”





## Safety

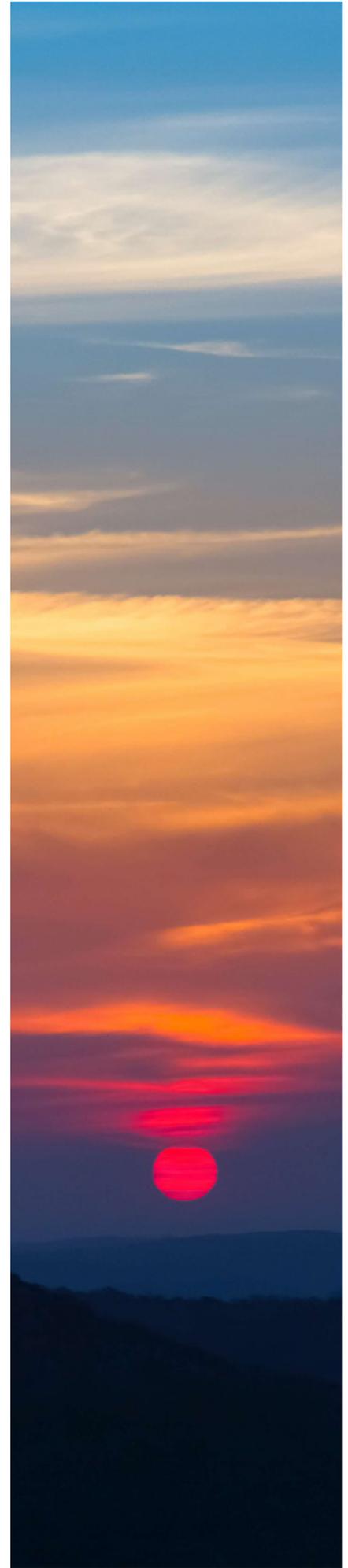
Our programmes in Ghana are safe experiences. Agape Volunteers does not promote high risk volunteer placements; nor, however, are we interested in “risk-free” volunteering. To remove all risk is to provide a tour, rather than a volunteer programme that we hope can make a real difference in people’s lives. Our responsibility lies in minimising risk and preparing you properly for your time in Ghana.

Agape Volunteers has a strong safety record in Ghana and we mean to keep it. To this end, we provide in-depth support to all our volunteers, before, during and after your programme. That starts here with this booklet, which is geared towards preparing you as fully as possible for your stay in Ghana. Here we will acquaint you with scenarios that might arise and ensure that you understand the potential risks and the support we offer to counter them.

We do not envisage ever having to deal with a situation where all volunteers must vacate the country. However, it would be naïve of us not to make contingency plans for a development of this kind. When you sign and return our Volunteer Policy, you provide us with contact information and your passport details. This allows us to coordinate an evacuation of volunteers with the relevant embassies in the event of an emergency. If you would like more information on our evacuation procedure, please contact Guillaume Lefevre at [gee@agapevolunteers.com](mailto:gee@agapevolunteers.com).

If you have any further questions after reading, please don’t hesitate to ask your trip adviser for more information. In country, the Ghanaian team will always be on hand to advise you on safety and any situations which may arise.

For further information on travel risks and how avoid them, see the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s travel advice for Ghana: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ghana>, or another major international advice agency.



## General

We advise that no volunteer should be out after dark, and that volunteers should stay indoors after 9pm.

Ghanaians are well known for being friendly to everyone they meet, especially volunteers helping out in their community. People may stop to say hello and it is polite to respond; however, they will understand if you are busy and can't chat for



long. Never accept an invitation to visit a stranger's house.

Unfortunately, a stereotype of westerners, especially white people, is that they are wealthy, so you may be asked for money. We are keen to discourage this stereotype, so it is best to apologise and leave if asked for money.

Giving money outside established programmes can be counterproductive and even dangerous, as it may attract unwanted attention. It can be particularly hard to refuse money to street children, however, there are enough projects in circulation to cater for nearly all street children. Those you meet are likely enrolled in a support programme already, or have chosen not to enter care. Giving money only encourages this. If you are concerned for a child, make a note of where they are and tell your host.

## Illness or Injury

Should you fall ill or suffer an accident during your stay in Ghana, Agape Volunteers will take rapid action to ensure that you receive proper care. Your hosts are on hand to provide immediate care, and the Ghanaian and UK teams are only a phone call away to deal with emergencies.

We will arrange transport to a doctor or hospital if necessary. You are eligible for 24 hour medical assistance as part of your travel insurance with Agape Volunteers, included as standard when you volunteer (please see above for more details).

Should you need to return home early, we will provide all the support we can to get your flights changed as soon as possible. Unfortunately, in accordance with our terms and conditions, we cannot be liable for any extra travel costs. In some circumstances repatriation will be covered by your travel insurance with Agape Volunteers.

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“ Giving money outside established programmes can be counterproductive and even dangerous”



## Theft & Crime

There is always a risk of theft when travelling abroad. While most trips to Ghana are trouble free, travellers should be wary of streetcrime.

Measures have been taken to secure your accommodation and you can consider this a safe space. However, you should take the following precautions:

- Seriously consider what you want to bring on your trip. We discourage you from bringing items which you consider valuable, as there will be always be a risk of damage or theft. This might include jewellery, clothes, cameras, laptops, or objects with sentimental value.
- Avoid making yourself a target. Do not carry large sums of money, and do not be ostentatious with your valuables –don't wear expensive watches or jewellery, don't flash your camera or your phone.
- Clothing with concealed pockets and zips will make you a less tempting target. Don't keep things in your back pocket and don't count your money in public places.
- Be wary of bag snatching in transport hubs and other public spaces. Avoid loose shoulder bags that could be easily snatched.
- Avoid taking large sums of money or valuables on transport, as the cramped conditions are ideal for pickpockets. Be wary in markets and crowded public places. Thieves' tactics are the same the world over, so do a quick Google search on evading pickpockets.
- Avoid travelling alone – it's safer and more fun to travel in a group.
- Be vigilant when withdrawing money from ATMs.
- Sadly, we have had cases of theft in the past where all the evidence pointed to another volunteer being the culprit. Make sure to find a secure hiding place for cash and valuables stored in your accommodation.

## HIV / Aids

HIV is not something to be afraid of, but certainly something to be aware of, especially for volunteers on medical placements. You will receive further briefing in orientation and at your placement, but all volunteers should be aware of how HIV is spread.

HIV is contracted through the exchange of bodily fluids. This includes unprotected sex, sharing needles or any situation where an open wound is exposed to another person's blood. Always wear gloves when dealing with blood injuries. For more information please see the APPENDIX.

## Terrorism

As with much of the world, there is a low level underlying threat of terrorism in Ghana. For more information and general travel advice, see the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Ghana page: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ghana](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ghana) or another major international travel advice agency.

“  
Whilst most visits to Ghana are trouble free, travellers should be wary of street crime”





Packing

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# Packing

Below are some suggestions about what to pack. Everything on these lists is essential or useful. When packing, seriously consider what you really need to bring with you. If you can live without an item, and think that you would be upset if it was lost, broken or stolen, consider leaving it behind.

## General Kit List

- Passport
- Yellow fever vaccination certificate
- Sheet sleeping bag or cotton sleeping bag liner
- Travel pillow
- Towel
- Toiletries and sanitary products – consider bringing dry shampoo and wet wipes. You may not be able to buy tampons, so bring enough to last your trip.
- Hand sanitizer
- Anti-malarial tablets
- Any other medication you require (e.g. EpiPens, inhalers, etc.)
- First aid kit
- Plasters
- Antiseptic cream
- Indigestion tablets
- Immodium or an equivalent anti-diarrhoeal
- Painkillers (paracetamol, ibuprofen, aspirin)
- Insect repellent (deet 50% or equivalent)
- Sun screen (enough to last your trip)
- Aftersun
- Water bottle
- Torch
- Mobile phone
- Adapter (if your country does not use the British 3-pin socket)
- Books
- Music
- Cards and games
- Pencil case and paper
- Any teaching aids or medical equipment you wish to bring (programme specific)

## Medical Volunteers Only

- Proof that you are studying a medical or related degree. For more information, ask your trip adviser or see the appendix
- Disposable gloves
- Antiseptic gel



“If you can live without an item, and think that you would be upset if it was lost, broken or stolen, consider leaving it behind.”

## Donations

It's unlikely you'll need all of the baggage allowance provided by your airline, so why not use that extra space to bring donated equipment and resources? Many of the following will be greatly appreciated by many of the projects we work with.

- Children's books and good quality learning resources
- Textbooks and other teaching aids
- Stationery
- Art supplies
- Toys and games
- Books

Ask your friends and family if they have things they no longer need, or get more creative with fund raising. If you have space, don't waste it!

For more ideas on what to bring please ask your trip adviser for an up-to-date list.

## Clothes

There are a couple of things to bear in mind when packing clothes for Ghana.

The first is the weather – it can vary quite a lot. You'll need to dress to protect yourself from the sun, but also be prepared for rain. Try not to wear too many white clothes, as these will be ruined by the dust/mud before long. Lightweight shoes will also be ruined quickly, so do not bring your favourite shoes.

The second thing to consider is standards of dress. Your



placement will expect a good standard of dress. In general, a clean t-shirt and shorts will be acceptable; however some programmes will have special requirements. If you are a woman, you will need to bear this in mind and respect some cultural expectations.

When on placement or in public, avoid short skirts and shorts above the knee, and do not leave your shoulders or midriff bare. Take care that underwear doesn't appear over waistbands.

Here's a few suggestions on what to bring:

- T-shirts
- Shorts
- Lightweight trousers and tops
- Jumper and jeans for the evenings
- Plenty of underwear
- Hat for the sun
- Sports clothing
- Swimming costume

- Trainers or boots
- Sandals
- Day shoes

## For Medical Volunteers Only:

- White lab coat/scrubs
- Disposable gloves
- Antiseptic gel

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“It's unlikely you'll need all of the baggage allowance provided by your airline, so why not use that extra space to bring donated equipment and resources?”



## Appendix

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## Programmes in Detail

The following pages cover our Ghanaian volunteer programmes, with details and tips.

Agape Volunteers is committed to placing volunteers only where they are needed, as far as we possibly can. If placing a volunteer will not benefit a project in any worthwhile way, we will avoid doing so. As the needs of individual placement projects are regularly changing, this can make placing volunteers a complicated business.

For this reason, although the descriptions below are representative of our programmes, we cannot guarantee that you will have the opportunity to take part in all the activities mentioned.

Similarly, we will not assign you to a specific placement project or provide details of one before you depart. In order to ensure that you are placed where your work will do the most good, placement projects are assigned by the Ghanaian team after you arrive.

On the other hand, we will always endeavour to fulfil your requests, if we can. If you are keen to get involved with a particular area of work, or have specific skills you think would be useful, please let your trip adviser know, and we will do our best to accommodate you.

## Teaching

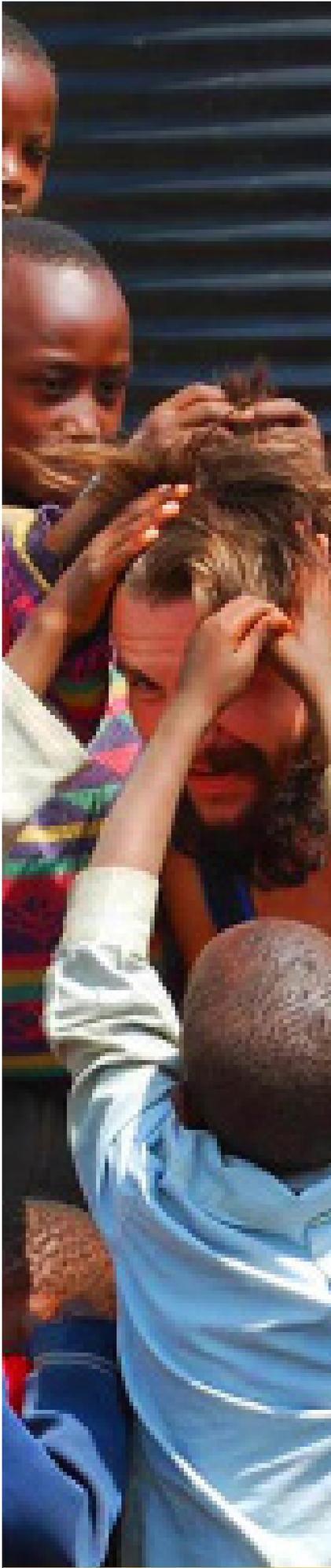
Teaching volunteers will likely be working in one of our partner schools, providing free lessons to children and supplementing local teachers. Pupils will normally be between the ages of five and fourteen, and the content of the syllabus will reflect this.

One of our main placements in Ghana is Becky's Preparatory School in Senya Beraku. This school consists of a daycare, primary and junior high-school and provides lessons to local children who may not be able to afford to attend other schools. It follows the local Ghanaian curriculum and has been duly approved by the Ghana Education Service.

Expect a lack of structure and a very repetitive teaching style from local staff – come along with games, ideas and plans to teach so that learning can be fun. It's important to provide long-term sustainable improvements by working within the structure already in place, and you will be asked to follow the schools' syllabus. However, it is important to create lessons which are engaging, interesting and fun so there is also plenty of scope for you to bring your own ideas.

You may be asked to teach lessons in English, Maths, Science, Religion and Social Studies. You may also be able to make a real difference by pitching in with other work projects around the school, such as cleaning, construction and decoration, so don't be afraid to chip in. Sports and Arts & Crafts can also play a key role in learning so if you have particular skills in these areas you may be asked to use them.





While there are advantages to working alongside a local teacher, one of the things that makes volunteering worthwhile is your personal engagement, so please be prepared to be flexible. It might seem hard to take lessons yourself to begin with, but soon you'll feel much more at home.

As it can take some time to settle in, take on board the cultural differences and learn about teaching styles and the structure of classes, we recommend teaching placements of at least 3 weeks long. Shorter placements are possible but 3 weeks is the minimum to really start fulfilling your role as a teaching volunteer.

Please note that teaching placements may change substantially during school holidays in April, August and December.

### Top Tips

Games are a fantastic way to teach children of all ages. Word games, like hangman, are constant favourites, which also develop the children's spelling and concentration. These games can be difficult when English is your second language, so providing words from a particular theme can help the kids along.

Dictation is also a very effective, though less engaging, method for developing your pupils' English. Hearing a native speaker of English is one of the best ways for children to learn how words are pronounced and sentences are structured, and just hearing you speak in class can be very helpful.

Competitions are another good technique – for example, try teaching the times tables in competition format, with sweets for prizes.

Most importantly, don't be afraid to use your imagination and initiative when teaching: the more exciting you can make classes, the more information your pupils will retain. Help the kids paint a map of the world to improve their geography, or try organising a mini-saga competition! On a long term placement, you can really make the classroom your own, decorating the room with your pupils' posters and work.

Don't worry if you feel under-prepared at this stage – more information and help will be on hand once you arrive in Ghana.

## Childcare

Childcare volunteers will be placed in one of our partnered children's home, caring for children aged between one and sixteen years.

One of our main childcare placements in Ghana was part funded by the Exceed Trust and provides care to over 50 local disadvantaged children. There is a clear exit strategy in place to ensure that children are eventually able to become self-reliant.



We aim at an holistic approach to childcare and you will be expected to engage in a wide range of activities, depending on the specific needs of your placement. For example, you may be asked to help provide school lessons, organise games and activities, assist with homework and school preparation, and help with meals, cleaning any ongoing construction projects.

Some of the most valuable work you'll do, of course, will be spending time with the children: playing with them, helping with homework and getting to know them. As a volunteer you can help to provide more individual care and attention for each child than may otherwise be possible. As well as spending time with the children on an informal basis, we encourage you to organise games and evening activities.

Forming friendships and helping to foster a sense of family and community is hugely important – some of the children will have lacked these all their lives. However, this can be difficult if you are volunteering for weeks rather than months. Remember that you will be passing through these children's lives and ensure you work with placement staff to provide support as part of long-term structural aims.

If you have childcare experience or training, please share your experience with other volunteers and placement staff – that way, your impact can live on even after you return home.

Childcare placements can be a lot of hard work, especially when entertaining and caring for large groups of children – so plenty of enthusiasm and a lot of energy are a must!

## Medical

Medical volunteers will work in a local hospital or clinic, working alongside local staff to provide treatment and care to patients. You will be asked to help with the needs of the day, always depending on your own experience level and expertise.

One of our main medical placements in Ghana is Senya Health Clinic which is the main medical facility in Senya Beraku, as well as servicing the population from surrounding villages. This placement is chronically under-resourced and your additional support can be vital for alleviating the pressure on local healthcare workers. Volunteers at this placement can expect to help with triage, maternity, records, or in the laboratory.

Wherever you volunteer, please remember to leave your expectations behind you – healthcare provision in the developing world is likely to shock and challenge you.

Soon after you arrive you will be introduced to the doctors and other staff members with whom you will be volunteering. Once assigned a supervisor at

### Top Tips:

Consider planning a project for you and the kids to do.

Think about the skills and experience you have to offer, and brainstorm about the kind of projects you could organise. You can always ask your trip adviser for help and advice.

Remember to make sure your project is feasible within the timescale of your programme, and that you bring any special equipment or materials you will need.

For ideas on teaching and activities, see the Teaching Top Tips, above.



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your placement you will need to follow their instructions at all times. Agape Volunteers has a wealth of experience working with clinics and hospitals, and in arranging volunteer placements. But local doctors are always the best qualified to provide specific medical instruction, particularly relating to prevalent conditions in Ghana.

You will be eased into the work – assisting with rounds, assessing new patients, and helping with records and lab work. It is important that your supervisor has a chance to get to know you before they allow you to do increasingly complex work.

If you are a medical or nursing student it is unlikely that you will play a significant role in major procedures, but you may observe and the doctor may call on your help if they feel you are capable. Qualified doctors and nurses will have more leeway but you should expect things to be approached on a case-by-case basis.

Medical volunteers may also have the chance to take part in local outreach work, joining up with other health workers to visit underserved villages or facilities such as schools. These projects generally consist of providing free checkups, immunizations and treatment, as well as serving as public education workshops. They run on a regular basis but are always dependent on having enough qualified practitioners and resources.

### Programme Requirements:

To be eligible for the medical programme you must have some background and experience in medicine. For example, you may be enrolled in a university level nursing program, be a qualified EMT, or undertaking a medical elective as part of your college medical degree. Please check with your trip adviser to ensure that you are eligible.

In order for us to arrange your medical placement, you must also submit documentation confirming your eligibility, and you may also need to pay an additional medical fee. The exact requirements may vary but you are likely to be asked for:

- Proof of your qualifications and/or enrollment in a university level medical-related programme
- A short letter outlining your qualifications and experience, and hopes and expectations for the programme

You should also bring either a white lab coat or medical scrubs as well as your own disposable gloves and antiseptic gel.

Please check with your trip adviser and also consult the Ghana Medical Supplement for more information.

### Top Tips:

Be aware of cultural and practical differences. The doctors with whom you will be working are skilled professionals, but you may encounter new or different practices while volunteering in Ghana. Your patients may also bring different attitudes and beliefs that you are not accustomed to. Please show respect for others in this area.

On the other hand, don't be afraid to ask questions (politely, of course)!

Be confident, but be honest. If you are not happy taking on a task that has been suggested, make it known. Doctors will want to make the most of your capabilities, but you will never be forced to take on a task you are uncomfortable carrying out.

Be patient. Whatever your skill and qualification level, working in a new environment alongside new colleagues is always a challenge, so don't expect to jump right into complex procedures. Your local supervisor will always have the final say on what work you are able to do.



## HIV/AIDS - Safety & Precaution

This is not something to be afraid of but certainly to be aware of. You will receive further briefing in orientation and at your placement, but here you can find a detailed account of how HIV is spread and how best to avoid infection.

HIV is found in blood and other body fluids such as semen and vaginal fluids. The virus does not live for long outside the body, so for transmission to occur you would generally need bodily fluid from an infected person to get inside your body. This can occur through contact with the bloodstream (through an open cut or wound) or by passing through delicate mucous membranes, such as inside the vagina, rectum or urethra, or by splashing onto a mucus membrane (inside the nose or the eyes).

HIV cannot be transmitted through spitting, sneezing, sharing glasses, cutlery or musical instruments. You also cannot be infected in swimming pools, showers or by sharing washing facilities or toilet seats. HIV cannot reproduce inside an insect (e.g. mosquitoes) so cannot transmit HIV to another person it feeds on.

Do not make direct contact with any person's blood or body fluids. Wear gloves when attending to someone who is bleeding or when cleaning up blood, vomit, faeces, pus, urine, non-intact skin or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth). Gloves should be changed after each use. Ask for help from a staff member if there is an injury or nosebleed. Stop any bleeding as quickly as possible. Apply pressure directly over the area with the nearest available cloth or towel. Help injured person to wash graze or wound in clean water with antiseptic. Cover wounds with a waterproof dressing or plaster. Keep all wounds, sores, grazes or lesions (where the skin is split) covered at all times. Wash hands or other skin surfaces that become exposed to blood or other body fluids immediately and thoroughly. Hands should be washed immediately after gloves are removed.

Cleaning should be done with running water. If this is not available, pour clean water from a container over the area to be cleaned. If antiseptic is available, clean the area with antiseptic. If blood has splashed on the face, particularly eyes or the mucous membranes of the nose and mouth, these should be flushed with running water for 3 minutes. Wash contaminated surfaces or floors with bleach and water (1 part bleach, 9 parts water). Seal in a plastic bag and incinerate (burn to ashes) bandages and cloths that become bloody, or send them to an appropriate disposal firm. Any contaminated instruments or equipment should be washed, soaked in bleach for an hour and dried. Ensure that bathrooms and toilets are clean, hygienic and free from blood spills.

As a volunteer with Agape you will not be put into any particularly high risk situations involving HIV and can always refuse to do anything that you consider dangerous.



## Basic Fante

Although most Ghanaians will generally speak good English, they will also speak the local dialect of Fante. You'll be able to converse with the locals in English but here are some basic Fante words and phrases to impress your host family with when they greet you. Please note that the spellings below are phonetic for ease of use (they look how the words sound) rather than with the correct Fante spellings.

### Greetings

Ak-wah-bah - Welcome

Ot-zi-den - How's it?  
(How are you?)

Boko - Fine (Reply to  
Ot-zi-den)

Nyu - Yes

Oho - No

Mi-pah-chow - Please

Meh-dah-si - Thankyou

Meh-dah-si pah-paa-  
paa - Thank you very  
much

Men-ti-a-say - I don't  
understand

Wo frowi-den - What is  
your name

Wo frenni... - My name  
is...

Er-oh-coy-in - Where  
are you going?

Mi roko - I am going to

Yen koh! - Let's go!

Eh-jank-ah -  
Orphanage

Ko - Go Away (signalled  
with the right hand,  
starting shut, then  
opening)

Bra - Come (signalled by  
closing your right hand. Be  
careful of waving this way,  
as you may alarm the kids.)

Obruni - Foreigner  
(white person) - be  
prepared to hear  
this a lot, especially  
from children, and be  
reassured that it isn't  
offensive in Fante!



### Further Study

Rosetta Stone do a very good comprehensive introduction to Swahili which is available from all good book stores and in-cludes an interactive CD.



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